



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
Senate
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Journal

SESSION NO. 33
Tuesday, November 29, 2022

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

Prepared by the
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Senate of the Philippines

SESSION NO. 33
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CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada led the prayer, to wit:

Damdamin po natin ang presensiya ng ating Makapangyarihang Diyos Ama, Anak, at Espiritu Santo.

Panginoon, marami pong salamat sa pagkakataong ito na kami ay nakapagtipon upang tuparin ang aming tungkulin bilang mambabatas ng bansang Pilipinas.

Marami pong salamat sa kalakasan, kalusugan, karunungan, kagalingan, at dedikasyon sa paglilingkod na iginawad po Ninyo sa amin upang araw-araw naming kaharapin ang mga hamon at balakid sa aming mga trabaho at responsibilidad.

Panginoon, ipahintulot po Ninyo na ang bawat gagawin namin sa Kongresong ito ay makapag-aambag sa tunay na ikabubuti at ikaiinam ng buhay ng bawat pamilyang Pilipino.

Nawa’y ang bawat pagdinig, bawat deliberasyon, bawat pagpupulong, bawat panukalang batas na tatalakayin at ipapasa namin, at bawat desisyon na mapagkakasunduan at mapagkakayarian namin ay naaayon sa Inyong mabuting kalooban.

Palagi po Ninyo kaming pagpalain upang kami ay patuloy na maging mabuting tao, mabuting tagapag-lingkod, at mabuting ama, ina, kapamilya sa aming mga tahanan.

Pagpalain po Ninyo ang aming mahal na bansang Pilipinas at ang buong sambayanang Pilipino upang kami ay makabangon muli sa tanikala ng kahirapan, ng hinagpis at pasakit ng mga nagdaang unos at trahedyang, at pinagdadaanang pandemya, krisis, at paghihikahos.

You called us to service, and we humbly submit ourselves to Your noble plan. Make us worthy of Your trust, the mandate, and the mission You have bestowed upon us. Make us channels of Your mercy and compassion. Use us as instruments of truth, justice, freedom, equality, love, and peace for the Filipino people.

These we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary.

Amen.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

It was 3:03 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:03 p.m. the session was resumed.

ROLL CALL

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Renato N. Bantug Jr., called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Binay, M. L. N. S.	Padilla, R. C.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Pimentel III, A. K.
Ejercito, J. V. G.	Poe, G.
Escudero, F. J. G.	Revilla Jr., R. B.
Estrada J. E.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Gatchalian, W.	Tulfo, R. T.
Go, C. L. T.	Villanueva, J.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Villar, C. A.
Legarda, L.	Villar, M. A.
Marcos, I. R.	Zubiri, J. M. F.

With 20 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Hontiveros and Cayetano (P) arrived after the roll call.

Senator Angara was on official business attending the bicameral conference meeting on the 2023 General Appropriations Bill, as indicated in the November 29, 2022 letter of his chief of staff.

Senator Cayetano (A) was absent.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the *Journal* of Session No. 32 (November 28, 2022) and considered it approved.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

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BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1552, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A VIBRANT BAMBOO INDUSTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES, PROVIDING FOR ITS SCIENTIFIC PROPAGATION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION, CREATING THE NATIONAL BAMBOO COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES (NBCP), ALLOCATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1553, entitled

AN ACT INCREASING THE PERSONNEL ECONOMIC RELIEF ALLOWANCE (PERA) GRANTED TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES TO FIVE THOUSAND PESOS (P5,000), AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committees on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1554, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING THE CATCHING, SALE, PURCHASE, POSSESSION, TRANSPORTATION, IMPORTATION, AND EXPORTATION OF ALL SHARKS, RAYS, AND CHIMAERAS AND ANY PART THEREOF IN THE COUNTRY

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

Senate Bill No. 1555, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR GERIATRIC HEALTH AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, CREATING REGIONAL GERIATRIC SPECIALTY CENTERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH-RETAINED HOSPITALS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Health and Demography; Ways and Means; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1556, entitled

AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS FOR MEMBERS OF



THE CITIZEN ARMED FORCES OR THE RESERVE FORCE OF THE ARMED
FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

**To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development;
National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation; Ways and Means;
and Finance**

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 319, entitled

RESOLUTION INQUIRING, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, AS TO THE CURRENT
STATUS OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN IN THE PHILIPPINES
PENDING THE END OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Introduced by Senator Villar (M)

To the Committee on Public Services

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 320, entitled

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING MAY RICHELL A. CESTINA-
PARSONS FOR RECEIVING THE PRESTIGIOUS GEORGE CROSS AWARD
FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 321, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO
CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE DELAYS ON
THE CONDUCT OF THE DECOMMISSIONING OF THE MORO ISLAMIC
LIBERATION FRONT (MILF) FORCES AND WEAPONS

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committee on National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Recon-
ciliation**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 322, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING FILIPINO PARA-ATHLETE ACHELLE GUION
FOR WINNING TWO GOLD MEDALS IN THE 2022 WORLD PARA
POWERLIFTING AFRICAN CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD IN CAIRO, EGYPT

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 323, entitled

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING THE 2022 GALING POOK AWARDEES FOR BEING EXEMPLARS OF INNOVATIVE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 324, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING FILIPINO PARA-ATHLETE ARIEL JOSEPH ALEGARBES FOR WINNING SILVER MEDAL IN THE 2022 VIRTUS OCEANIA ASIA GAMES HELD IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 325, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE BATANGAS STATE UNIVERSITY ENGINEERING STUDENTS TEAM FOR BEING THE CHAMPION-UNIVERSITY CATEGORY IN THE ENGINEERING INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2022 HELD IN SINGAPORE

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 326, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING SANDI ABAHAN AND ANDRICO MAHILUM FOR BEING CROWNED WORLD CHAMPIONS AT THE 2022 ALTITUDE OBSTACLE COURSE RACING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD IN MT. EVEREST

Introduced by Senator Lapid

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 327, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING FILIPINO BOXER, RONEL SUYOM FOR WINNING SILVER MEDAL IN THE MEN'S 46-48 KG DIVISION AT THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL BOXING ASSOCIATION WORLD YOUTH BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS HELD IN LA NUCIA, SPAIN

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Rules



Proposed Senate Resolution No. 328, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING RODOLFO "JUN" R. LANA, JR. FOR HIS FILM,
ABOUT US BUT NOT ABOUT US, BEING SELECTED AS THE CRITIC'S
BEST FILM IN THE 26TH BLACK NIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL HELD IN
TALLINN, ESTONIA

Introduced by Senator Revilla Jr.

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 329, entitled

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND CONGRATULATING MA. LOVELLA
CATALAN AND JACKIE LOU SUAREZ FOR THEIR IMPRESSIVE
PERFORMANCE AT THE 2022 SEA DEAF GAMES

Introduced by Senator Villanueva

To the Committee on Rules

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

It was 3:08 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:14 p.m., the session was resumed with Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda presiding.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 21 Novembers 2022, the House of Representatives designated Representatives Co (E), Quimbo, Recto, Gonzales Jr., Dalipe, Marcos, Suarez, Gonzales II, Aquino II, Bongalon, Madrona, Duavit, Libanan, and Lagman as conferees to the Bicameral Conference Committee, on the disagreeing votes of House Bill No. 4488, entitled

AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO
DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-THREE.

To the Committee on Rules

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 21 November 2022, the House of Representatives passed the following House bills, in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate:

House Bill No. 454, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING ENHANCED PROTECTION, SECURITY, AND BENEFITS
FOR MEDIA WORKERS

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**To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development;
and Public Information and Mass Media**

House Bill No. 5819, entitled

AN ACT DIVIDING BARANGAY 176 ALSO KNOWN AS BARANGAY BAGONG SILANG IN THE CITY OF CALOOCAN INTO SIX (6) SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT BARANGAYS TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY 176-A, BARANGAY 176-B, BARANGAY 176-C, BARANGAY 176-D, BARANGAY 176-E, AND BARANGAY 176-F;

House Bill No. 5820, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE SITIOS OF KAINGGIAN, BUTAC, COSCOSNONG, LONGBOY, BANGCAG, AND BOTIGUE FROM BARANGAY MAN-ATONG IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SUYO, PROVINCE OF ILOCOS SUR, AND CONSTITUTING THEM INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT BARANGAY TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY BUTAC;

House Bill No. 5821, entitled

AN ACT CREATING A BARANGAY IN THE CITY OF TAGUIG TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY KATUPARAN;

House Bill No. 5822, entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE SITIOS OF KIMBUAYA, LONGBOY, BULALA, KINAPIAN, INDADANGAN, KUMANIBE AND MACAAG FROM BARANGAY SUYO PROPER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SUYO, PROVINCE OF ILOCOS SUR, AND CONSTITUTING THEM INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT BARANGAY TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY KINAPIAN; and

House Bill No. 5823, entitled

AN ACT DIVIDING BARANGAY ADAMS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ADAMS, PROVINCE OF ILOCOS NORTE, INTO THREE (3) DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT BARANGAYS TO BE KNOWN AS BARANGAY ADAN, BARANGAY BUCAROT, AND BARANGAY MALASIN.

To the Committees on Local Government; and Electoral Reforms and People's Participation

House Bill No. 5824, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 6 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BANSALAN, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5826, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING SEPTEMBER 1 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON, TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG BUKIDNON," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5827, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MARCH 21 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF CALAPAN, PROVINCE OF ORIENTAL MINDORO, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS CHARTER ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5828, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JANUARY 29 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF STA. MARIA, PROVINCE OF BULACAN, TO BE KNOWN AS "FRANCISCO SANTIAGO DAY" IN HONOR OF THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF FILIPINO MUSICIAN AND COMPOSER FRANCISCO SANTIAGO;

House Bill No. 5829, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 15 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF GENERAL SANTOS IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS CHARTER ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5831, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING NOVEMBER 4 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEZON, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF REVOLUTIONARY HERO APOLINARIO DELA CRUZ, POPULARLY KNOWN AS "HERMANO PULI";

House Bill No. 5832, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING SEPTEMBER 14 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF STA. CRUZ, PROVINCE OF OCCIDENTAL MINDORO, IN CELEBRATION OF THE "FEAST DAY OF THE HOLY CROSS";

House Bill No. 5833, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING NOVEMBER 22 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF STA. MARIA, PROVINCE OF BULACAN, TO BE KNOWN AS 'HUSENG BATUTE DAY' IN HONOR OF THE LIFE AND LITERARY WORK OF FILIPINO POET AND WRITER JOSE CORAZON DE JESUS;

House Bill No. 5834, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 18 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KIBLAWAN, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5836, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 24 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALAYAN, PROVINCE OF BATANGAS, IN CELEBRATION OF THE "PARADA NG LECHON";

AI

House Bill No. 5837, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MARCH 30 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF PUERTO PRINCESA, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS DECLARATION AS THE "CITY OF THE LIVING GOD";

House Bill No. 5838, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 17 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MAGSAYSAY, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5839, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MAY 28 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MALALAG, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, TO BE KNOWN AS "*ARAW NG MALALAG*," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5840, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JUNE 22 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MATANAO, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5841, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING SEPTEMBER 6 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MENDEZ-NUÑEZ, PROVINCE OF CAVITE, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5842, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JANUARY 16 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF NAVOTAS IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5843, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JANUARY 8 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PAVIA, PROVINCE OF ILOILO, TO BE KNOWN AS "PAVIA DAY," TO COMMEMORATE ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5844, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING AUGUST 30 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF SAN JUAN, TO BE KNOWN AS "*ARAW NG PINAGLABANAN*," IN COMMEMORATION OF THE BATTLE OF PINAGLABANAN, WHICH OCCURRED ON AUGUST 30, 1896;

House Bill No. 5845, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JULY 1 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF SAN CARLOS, PROVINCE OF NEGROS

AB

OCCIDENTAL, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5846, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING SEPTEMBER 21 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN MATEO, PROVINCE OF RIZAL, TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG BAYAN NG SAN MATEO," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5847, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING NOVEMBER 28 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE PROVINCE OF SARANGANI IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5848, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING OCTOBER 5 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF STA. CRUZ, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG STA. CRUZ'," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5849, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING APRIL 24 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SULOP, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR, TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG SULOP," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY;

House Bill No. 5850, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING JANUARY 6 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN QUEZON CITY, TO BE KNOWN AS "TANDANG SORA DAY," IN COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MELCHORA AQUINO, ALSO KNOWN IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY AS THE "MOTHER OF THE KATIPUNAN";

House Bill No. 5851, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING NOVEMBER 12 OF EVERY YEAR A REGULAR NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF VALENZUELA, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY; and

House Bill No. 5852, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING APRIL 1 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF STA. CRUZ, PROVINCE OF OCCIDENTAL MINDORO, TO BE KNOWN AS "ARAW NG STA. CRUZ," IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY"

To the Committee on Local Government



House Bill No. 5936, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING NARURON FALLS LOCATED IN BARANGAY OYAO, MUNICIPALITY OF DUPAX DEL NORTE, PROVINCE OF NUEVA VIZCAYA, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 5937, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE BEGA FALLS LOCATED IN BARANGAY MABUHAY, MUNICIPALITY OF PROSPERIDAD, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 5938, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE LAKE HIMBANG LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TALACOGON, PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 5939, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE AGUSAN MARSH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF TALACOGON, SAN FRANCISCO, ROSARIO, BUNAWAN, LORETO, LA PAZ AND VERUELA, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE;

House Bill No. 5954, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING TORRIJOS WHITE BEACH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TORRIJOS, PROVINCE OF MARINDUQUE, A TOURISM DESTINATION;

and House Bill No. No. 5955, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITY OF SANTA CRUZ, PROVINCE OF MARINDUQUE, A TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AREA.

To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; and Finance

House Bill No. 5956, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF OUR LADY OF CANDELARIA PARISH CHURCH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SILANG, PROVINCE OF CAVITE, AS A TOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 5957, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF THE SAINT MATTHIAS PARISH CHURCH LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TUMAUNI, PROVINCE OF ISABELA, AS A TOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 5959, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS LOCATED IN BARANGAY DON BOSCO, PARAÑAQUE CITY, A TOURISM DESTINATION; and



House Bill No. 5960, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF PADRE PIO, COMMONLY KNOWN AS PADRE PIO SHRINE, LOCATED IN BARANGAY SAN PEDRO, CITY OF STO. TOMAS, PROVINCE OF BATANGAS, AS TOURISM DESTINATION.

To the Committees on Tourism; and Finance

House Bill No. 5966, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR AS THE HOME OF THE GOLDEN TARA;

To the Committees on Culture and the Arts; and Tourism

House Bill No. 5967, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE MINDANAO CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TUBOD, PROVINCE OF LANA DEL NORTE, A SPORTS TOURISM DESTINATION;

To the Committees on Tourism; Sports; and Finance

House Bill No. 5958, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE FUYOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK LOCATED IN BARANGAY STA. VICTORIA, CITY OF ILAGAN, PROVINCE OF ISABELA, AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 5961, entitled

AN ACT RECOGNIZING THE MUNICIPALITY OF BALER IN THE PROVINCE OF AURORA AS THE 'BIRTHPLACE OF PHILIPPINE SURFING' AND DECLARING IT AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 5962, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE MUNICIPALITY OF SAN MARIANO AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF PALANAN, PROVINCE OF ISABELA, AS ECOTOURISM ZONES, TO BE JOINTLY KNOWN AS THE SAN MARIANO-PALANAN ECOTOURISM CORRIDOR;

House Bill No. 5963, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE POLILLO GROUP OF ISLANDS AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF MAUBAN IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEZON A TOURISM ZONE;

House Bill No. 5968, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING PILIS FALLS LOCATED IN BARANGAY PALILI, MUNICIPALITY OF SAMAL, PROVINCE OF BATAAN, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 5969, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING MOUNT 387 OR MOUNT BATONG-AMAT LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CARRANGLAN, PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA, AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 5970, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE MIGHTY CAVE PARK LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TAGOLOAN, PROVINCE OF LANA DEL NORTE, AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION;

House Bill No. 5971, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING BARANGAY TALA IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF ORANI, PROVINCE OF BATAAN, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE;

House Bill No. 5972, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING LULUGAYAN FALLS LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CALBIGA, PROVINCE OF SAMAR, AN ECOTOURISM SITE;

House Bill No. 5973, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE ISLAS DE GIGANTES LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CARLES, PROVINCE OF ILOILO, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE;

House Bill No. 5974, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE TAMBALIZA ISLAND LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CONCEPCION, PROVINCE OF ILOILO, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE;
and

House Bill No. 5998, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING THE MALASI TREE PARK AND WILDLIFE SANCTUARY LOCATED IN BARANGAY SAN ANTONIO, MUNICIPALITY OF CABAGAN, PROVINCE OF ISABELA, AN ECOTOURISM ZONE.

To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; and Finance

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests from the Cordillera Autonomous Region:

From Benguet

- Board Member Johannes Amuasen;
- Board Member Alexander Fianza;
- Board Member Joel Tingbaoen Jr.;
- Board Member Robert Canuto;

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- Mayor Ruben Tindaan of Buguias;
- Mayor Armando Lauro of Tublay;
- Mayor Alfredo Dacumos Jr. of Sablan;
- Vice Governor Ericson Felipe;

From Ifugao

- Board Member Alberto Binlang Jr.;
- Mayor Gaspar Chilagan Jr. of Aguinaldo;
- Mayor Archie Lee Quindo of Asipulo;
- Mayor Casan P. Dumulag of Hungduan;
- Mayor Joel Bungallon of Banaue;

From Mt. Province

- Board Member Johnson Bantog II;
- Mayor Adolf Ganggangan of Sadanga;
- Mayor Marcial Lawilao Jr. of Sabangan;
- Mayor Felicito Dula of Sagada;
- Mayor Constituto Masweng of Tadian;
- Mayor Jose Agagon of Natonin; and
- Mayor Clark Ngaya of Barlig.

Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda welcomed the guests to the Senate.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR TULFO

Availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Tulfo called the Body's attention to the ban on the sale of salmon and pampano fishes in the market. His full speech follows:

Pampano and Salmon

BFAR Pinagbawal ang Pagtinda

Pasko na at panahon na naman ng sunod-sunod na handaan. Bilang mga Pilipino, may pera o wala, ginagawan natin ng paraan na makapaghanda tayo para sa ating mga pamilya. Gaano man kaliit ang budget ay nagagawan natin ito ng paraan na maging espesyal ang handaan. Kaya marami ang nagulat nang lumabas sa balita na pinagbabawal na ng BFAR ang pagtinda sa merkado ng salmon at pampano. Mabenta ang salmon at pampano dahil bukod sa malasa na ito, abot kaya pa sa karaniwang mamimili.

Kaya naman nangamba ang mga maliliit at kawawang mga tindera na umaasa sana sa pagkakakitaan nila sa pagtinda ng mga isdang ito. Ilang taon na nilang pinagkukunan ng kanilang kabuhayan itong mga isda na ito, tapos ngayong kalagitnaan ng holiday season, biglang pinagbawal. Binigyan lang sila hanggang December 3 para ibenta ang mga ito, at pagdating ng December 4, ito daw ay kukumpiskahin na!

At syempre nabigla rin ang mga mamimili na nais makapaghain ng mga pagkaing ito sa Pasko. sinigang na ulo ng salmon, salmon belly teriyaki, fried pampano, paksiw na pampano, inihaw na pampano—hindi pa ba kayo nagugutom diyan? Pasensya na, pero ang mga mayayaman na lang na may pera ang makakakain sa hotel at restaurant ng mga isdang ito. Or, kung gusto mong kumain nito, yung de lata lang ang pwede mong bilhin. This is anti-poor.

What exactly is the basis of BFAR's actions? According to BFAR, the sale and importation of pampano and pink salmon in wet markets is prohibited in Fisheries Administrative Order 195, which was issued in 1999.

Fisheries Administrative Order 195-99

What exactly is FAO 195? According to FAO 195, the importation of fish and fishery products shall be allowed only when certified as necessary by the Secretary, in order to achieve food

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security; taking into consideration public welfare and safety; in consultation with the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (NFARMC).

Pero may exception po na inilagay ang BFAR sa FAO 195: The importation of fresh/chilled/frozen fish and fishery products for canning and processing purposes, including importation undertaken by institutional buyers, does not require such certification. Ibig sabihin, puwede sa mga hotel at restaurant. Kaya iyong mga gustong kumain ng pampano at pink salmon, "sorry na lamang," sabi ng BFAR. Pumunta kayo ng restaurant at hotel para makakain kayo ng masarap na isda na ito.

At dahil dito sa mga nakasaad sa FAO 195, ano ang ginawa ng BFAR? They went to markets informing small fish vendors that they can no longer sell after December 3, so they have to sell their stocks, itong mga pampano at salmon.

The Problem with FAO 195

May tatlong problema po ako dito sa ginawa ng BFAR at sa FAO 195.

Una. Ang FAO 195 is about the importation of fish and fishery products. Why, then, in the implementation of the law and FAO 195, itong maliliit at pobreng mga tindera sa palengke ang pinag-iinitan at pinahihirapan? Their regulation and campaign should be done in ports, and in coordination with the Bureau of Customs. Why are they making a show at wet markets with these fish vendors? Binili lamang ng mga ito ang mga isda. Hindi sila ang importer.

Pangalawa. Ito ang nakakapagtaka. According to this FAO 195, it is based on Republic Act No. 8550, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, particularly, Section 61, paragraphs (c) and (d). According to the Fisheries Code, "Fishery products may be imported only when the importation has been certified as necessary by the Department in consultation with the FARMC, but as an exception, fish imports for canning/processing purposes only may be allowed without the necessary certification."

Something smells fishy here. In the law, the exception from the need of a Certification of the Necessity to Import (CNI) only applies to canning/processing purposes; pero sa FAO 195, naisama ang institutional buyers like hotels and restaurants from being allowed to import without the need for the CNI. Ang tanong, sino ang magaling na nagdagdag nito sa FAO 195. Ang mayayaman na restaurant at hotel, nakalusot sa pag-import ng isda pero ang maliliit na tindera sa palengke, hindi pwede. At bakit? This is a clear violation of equal protection. Malinaw na malinaw na discrimination po ito laban sa mga maliliit na tindera sa merkado. And more importantly, BFAR went beyond the provisions of the law.

Pangatlo. Bakit pampano at salmon ang biglaang pinatigil sa pagbebenta at hindi iyong ibang mga imported na isda tulad ng cream dory? Ang daming ibang imported fish products sa market. Is someone trying to boost the sale of other imported fish na hindi na maibenta?

Consultation

According to FAO 195, prior to the issuance of a Certification of the Necessity of the Importation, there must be a consultation with the NFARMC to determine the following: a) the importation is necessary for food security; and b) there is serious injury or threat to domestic industry that produces like or directly competitive products. Apart from that, there should also be an inquiry with the appropriate local government unit on the supply and demand situation for fishery products, as observed in their respective localities. Nangyari ba ang consultation na ito? Bakit bigla-bigla na lamang ang pagpapatigil ng pagbebenta ng mga nasabing isda?

NFARMC

Also, there is a need to review the composition of the NFARMC. Ito po ang composition ng NFARMC:

- a) The Undersecretary of Agriculture, as chairman;
- b) The Undersecretary for Interior and Local Government;
- c) Five (5) members representing the fisherfolk/fishworkers;

- d) Five (5) members representing commercial fishing, aquaculture, and fish processing sector;
- e) Two (2) fishery experts from the academe; and
- f) One (1) representative of NGOs involved in fisheries.

If they are the ones consulted regarding the importation of fish, why is there no representative from the fish market vendors and consumers? Fish vendors and consumers are affected by the issuance of these CNIs. Why were they not consulted?

Recommendation

Kailangan po nating alamin saan nanggagaling ang masangsang na amoy na ito na ginawa ng BFAR. For one, FAO 195 is a 23-year old issuance. Maybe it should be reviewed to be in tune with the needs of the industry. And I have no doubt that our dear president, Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, who is focusing on fixing and cleaning the problematic system in the Department of Agriculture and its attached agencies, particularly BFAR, will be on top of this. I am sure he will have a balanced approach in protecting our local fisherfolk, as well as our vendors and consumers with regard to the importation of fish and fish products.

And I am warning BFAR to get its act together to implement the law as intended by the legislature *Bawal ang dagdag-bawas sa mga rules and regulations ninyo.* And if the problem is importation, fix the importation. Catch the smugglers. *Huwag itong mga tindera sa mga palengke na naghahanapbuhay lamang.* I will not stand for people parading themselves as protectors of the poor when their act is actually out to benefit the few rich, and business interests. *Huwag po tayong ganyan. Hayaan ninyo naman din pong makakain ng masarap ang taong-bayan.*

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Senator Tolentino stated that had he known in advance the content of Senator Tulfo’s privilege speech, which he found very informative and substantive, he would have prolonged his questions during the agency’s budget deliberation.

Asked by Senator Tolentino if he agreed with the observation that BFAR circulars were not only antiquated, but also issued in a murky manner, Senator Tulfo replied in the affirmative, saying that his description of “*masangsang ang amoy*” referred to the abrupt changes made to the original law that allowed fish importation by hotels and restaurants, when originally such privilege was only given to the canning industry. He noted that since then, even hotel and restaurant suppliers have been supplying fish to the markets causing more confusion.

As to whether the importation in question was part of the 25,000 metric tons of fish scheduled for importation in the fourth quarter of the year due to a BFAR-issued fisheries permit, Senator Tulfo replied in the negative. Additionally, he stated that he could not understand why only salmon and pampano fishes had been banned when there were other imported fishes in the market, such as *galunggong* and cream dory. He stated that BFAR should make public its reason for banning such species of fish, and why it took so long time to enforce a 1999 administrative order.

Senator Tolentino said that BFAR’s move was well-timed for the holiday season, since it coincided with the DA’s ban of poultry products from Japan, Hungary, and the United States. He concurred with Senator Tulfo’s earlier statement that the move was discriminatory against low-income consumers, especially with the advent of the holiday season.

Senator Tulfo reiterated that the ban was a kind of discrimination against the poor, who would rather buy fish from the market due to lower prices than in hotels and restaurants, and that prohibitive prices would deter regular citizens from frequenting such establishments.

Senator Tolentino then informed the Body that when he traveled to Ifugao by land, he noted that there was a BFAR branch as he was traversing the Municipality of Lagawe.

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He observed that although there were BFAR offices in remote places such as Ifugao Province, the locals themselves are being deprived of some varieties of fish that are only available in Baguio's fine restaurants and hotels. He then inquired as to whether it was time to amend the existing fisheries law so that the agency would need to hold consultations with interested parties such as market buyers, sellers, and consumers at every step.

Senator Tulfo responded in the affirmative, saying that he had seen a television interview with the BFAR spokesperson who explained that the bureau lacked the necessary people to implement the 20-year old administrative order prohibiting the sale of imported fish, such as pink salmon and pampano.

Senator Tolentino believed that BFAR personnel were solely concerned with expensive varieties of fish rather than cheaper alternatives, such as *tilapia* and *karpa*. He also wondered why BFAR was prohibiting the sale of pink salmon and pampano in local markets, considering that such supplies are most needed when the fishing season is closed from November 1 to January of the following year. He surmised that even the BOC might need an overhaul as well.

In response, Senator Tulfo surmised that some BFAR personnel might be soliciting money from pink salmon and pampano importers in exchange for its recent implementation of FAO 195.

At this point, Senator Tolentino requested an update on the canning industry in the Zamboanga Peninsula, mentioning a time when the fisherfolk were forbidden from catching *tamban* or sardines. He believed that the country has an oversupply of sardines that even canned sardines are typically given to disaster victims. He noticed that the ban was extremely arbitrary and discriminatory and did not appear to be part of an overall fisheries policy.

Concurring with Senator Tolentino, Senator Tulfo surmised that BFAR was truly negligent in its job because the 1999 statute was implemented only recently. In addition, he believed that there was something off with their delayed implementation of FAO 195, and an agency overhaul was indeed necessary to weed out corrupt employees.

Senator Tolentino lauded Senator Tulfo for having thoroughly researched the issue and for taking the cudgels for the plight of the local fisherfolk. He said that he would be looking forward to a Senate investigation on the matter.

He also believed that the Philippines has abundant and sufficient marine resources, particularly after he had the opportunity to sample delectable tuna or "Wagyu of the Sea" during a recent trip to General Santos City. He opined that the current supply shortage might be an offshoot of the erroneous policy of BFAR.

Finally, he stated that they could help the fisherfolk not by resorting to a band-aid solution but through an overhaul of the fisheries policy.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

Associating herself with the privilege speech of Senator Tulfo, Senate President Tempore Legarda also shared the same frustration over the non-implementation of the law, which was claimed to be due to a lack of personnel.

She then pointed out that certain comments made by Senator Tulfo should be stricken off the *Record of the Senate*, pursuant to Section 93 of the *Rules of the Senate*.

Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda however assured Senator Tulfo that she shared his desire to help straighten out certain government agencies in their implementation of laws.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLAR (C)

Senator Villar (C) requested a copy of Senator Tulfo's privilege speech, as it would serve as the basis for her committee to conduct a hearing on BFAR.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva lauded Senator Tulfo for bringing up the issue and taking the initiative to correct and awaken a government entity for its belated implementation of a law. He stated that even during the budget deliberations, the Senate kept on asking the various agencies what assistance they required.

He then presented two school of thoughts regarding the importation of fish: the first is to stop importing pink salmon and pampano because it would have a significant impact on the local fisherfolk, and the second is to import the fish in order to reduce its price, thereby making it more affordable for locals. He then inquired as to how the matter could be resolved.

Senator Tulfo concurred that a win-win solution was required in such a situation. He stated that all Filipinos, regardless of wealth, should have access to imported fish. He stated that it is crucial for government to strictly regulate the importation of pink salmon and pampano and that its policies should be formulated in consultation with stakeholders, such as the fisherfolk, suppliers, hotels, restaurants, and the canning industry.

Senator Villanueva likewise expressed his support for Senator Tulfo's privilege speech.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUEST

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of Rep. Roy M. Loyola from the Fifth District of Cavite.

Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda welcomed the guest to the Senate.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR POE

Senator Poe inquired as to the rationale for issuing FAO 195. Senator Tulfo responded that it was based on Republic Act No. 8550, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, which prioritizes the selling of locally caught fish over imported varieties. He stated that for reasons of safety and health, imported fish such as pink salmon must be evaluated to test their quality before being certified as safe for human consumption.

Senator Poe suggested that BFAR examine the quality of imported products instead of banning their sale. She revealed that some *galunggong* varieties that were available in the country were even imported.

In response to the observation that pink salmon and pampano were still available in grocery stores and supermarkets, Senator Tulfo clarified that the imported fish are still available to large companies, hotels, and restaurants, but would be prohibited in wet markets where the majority of the customers are usually low-income individuals. He reiterated that the objective of BFAR was not the sale of fish, rather their importation, and that the agency should have taken action while the fish were still in the custody of the BOC.

Senator Poe pointed out that the country also imports other kinds of fish like cream dory and *galunggong*.

She stated that the importation process must be revised because it appeared that the only option for Filipinos to have pampano and pink salmon was dining in restaurants or hotels, which was discriminatory against the poor who could not afford to do so.

Asked if the Department of Agriculture can request BFAR to amend or repeal the department order, Senator Tulfo replied in the affirmative. He reiterated that the Department should regulate the importation of fish and solicit input from all stakeholders to ensure that the products are available to all consumers.

Senator Poe urged BFAR to review the department order and revise it in accordance with the proper importation procedures of seafood products. She called for a moratorium on the order while its revision was under consideration.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel commended Senator Tulfo for bringing the issue to the fore, and the former said that he could not comprehend why BFAR banned the sale of only two species of fish in wet markets and grocery stores, yet the same species may be sold in restaurants and hotels. He stated that he had reviewed Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 195 issued in 1999, and deduced that it established a permission system for imported fish and aquaculture products. He stated that by imposing the restriction, BFAR was implying that imported pampano and pink salmon were contraband products for which permits had not been obtained. On the other hand, he stated that it also meant that pampano and pink salmon served in restaurants and hotels were permitted. He said that if it were the case, then the FAO was being applied improperly.

Since imported fish must first be certified and issued a permit before they can be sold in the country, Senator Tulfo suggested that BFAR primarily investigate the Bureau of Customs rather than the wet market vendors. He pointed out that there were distinct fish suppliers for the wet markets and for the restaurants and hotels, and that the ban was a result of a conflict between the two. Senator Pimentel agreed that BFAR should have given priority pursuing illegal importers. He concurred that the controversy might have stemmed from deeper issues, which may have involved substantial amounts of money.

Senator Tulfo stated that the policy that no permits are needed for pampano and pink salmon sold in restaurants and hotels discriminates against the economically disadvantaged who can only afford to buy such products at wet markets.

Senator Pimentel also stated that he saw no reason for BFAR to set a deadline for the sale of pampano and pink salmon in wet markets because market forces influence consumer preferences. He opined that the local fishing industry would hardly be affected if consumers' budget could only afford to purchase locally caught fish instead of the more expensive imported fish. He added that he could not understand why the fish should be banned for health reasons.

Thus, Senator Pimentel stated that during the committee hearing, BFAR should be asked to provide the rationale and legal basis for the ban aside from FAO 195 which is a 23-year old document that must be evaluated and updated to remain responsive to the times.

Relative thereto, he informed the Body that he and Senator Hontiveros intended to transform BFAR into a distinct department to be known as the Department of Oceans, Fisheries, and Aquatic Resources, which would be more focused on the issues of the industries and jurisdiction involved. Senator Tulfo concurred.

Senator Pimentel reiterated his view that BFAR violated the principle of equal protection of the laws in interpreting and enforcing FAO 195. He added that it must be prepared to answer questions

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regarding the double-standard application of the law, where high-end establishments are not required to obtain a permit for the importation of pampano and pink salmon, while those intended for sale in wet markets require a permit, and why the agency was only going after retail vendors instead of the importers.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR LEGARDA

Senator Legarda inquired as to why FAO 195 was not implemented until 2022, more than two decades after its issuance. She also asked on the physio-sanitary justifications for the ban on particular types of food, specifically pampano and pink salmon, and how those whose livelihood depended on selling in wet markets would be affected by the ban.

She recalled that FAO 195 was signed in 1999 by then Secretary of Agriculture Edgardo Angara. She opined that former Secretary Angara must have had a compelling reason for banning the selling of specific varieties of fish at the time.

Senator Legarda supposed that then-Agriculture Secretary Angara and Dir. Malcolm Sarmiento had valid reasons for issuing FAO 195. She questioned why a 1999 administrative order was only being recognized and enforced 23 years after. She also asked for instances when FAO 195 was enforced. Responding thereto, Senator Tulfo stated that in the interview with Ted Failon, the BFAR spokesperson admitted vaguely that the agency did not promptly implement the order and the law.

Senator Legarda stated that the lawmakers should find out whether FAO 195 was ever implemented and what prompted BFAR to abruptly decide to implement it so abruptly at the present time. She believed there was an impending purpose for the agency to issue the department order when it was issued. Senator Tulfo emphasized that FAO 195 was a response to the 1998-enacted RA 8550, but that there was no record of BFAR enforcing FAO 195 prior to its recent announcement prohibiting the sale of imported pampano and salmon in wet markets.

Asked if pampano and salmon are grown or cultured in the Philippines, Senator Tulfo opined that both fishes are not farmed locally since their sale in wet markets is prohibited. He stated that the order did not specify whether the pampano and salmon to be banned were imported or produced locally, therefore the restriction applies to both, regardless of origin, beginning December 4.

Senator Legarda disclosed that she was informed that both pampano and salmon are farm-grown in the provinces of Sarangani and Pangasinan. Senator Tulfo stated that BFAR's restriction includes pampano and salmon fish imports.

As to how vendors could differentiate between the local and imported fishes, Senator Tulfo stated that BFAR's directive is to ban the sale of all imported pampano and salmon fish in public markets.

Senator Legarda then read to the Body Section 2 of FAO 195, to wit:

“Sec. 2. Importation of fresh/chilled/frozen fish and fishery/aquatic products. – The importation of fresh/chilled/frozen fish and fishery/aquatic products shall be allowed when certified as necessary by the Secretary in order to achieve food security taking into consideration public welfare and safety, in consultation with the NFARMC: Provided, That the importation of fresh/chilled/frozen fish and fishery/aquatic products for canning and processing purposes including importation undertaken by institutional buyers does not require such certification; Provided Further, That all importation satisfies the Permit to Import and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) requirements as provided under Section 67 of Republic Act No. 8550, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) Standards, and as provided for under this Order.”

She noted that Section 2 does not ban, but simply requires a permit that meets the standards set forth.

Senator Tulfo averred that only items mentioned in the Certification of Necessity to Import may be imported into the country. He pointed out that importation, but not sale, should be regulated, and that the BOC should be involved in the importation of fish. Senator Legarda noted that it should also include import permits and transshipment ports authorizations.

She then emphasized the need for the Body to find out whether BFAR amended FAO 195 or it was being implemented *in toto*, which requires the necessary permits—CNI, filing of the application, duration of a permit, and international health certificate from the country of origin. She stated that there must be a justification for the current banning of the sale of such fishes in wet markets. She believed that there was misinformation or miscommunication regarding the interpretation of FAO 195, and that lawmakers should be made aware of the reason for its belated implementation 23 years later. Considering the lack of cold storage facilities in public markets, she questioned the safety of eating salmon and pampano. She also inquired as to what BFAR will do with the confiscated fish, particularly those coming from remote areas where information is delayed.

Senator Tulfo stated that there is nothing to confiscate if BFAR does not see a vendor selling it. He believed that consuming pampano and salmon presents no health risks. He reiterated that BFAR insisted that it was merely carrying out a 23-year-old directive that could not be implemented due to lack of manpower.

Senator Legarda argued that FAO 195 does not prohibit the importation of fish, but rather informs fish importers that they must indicate the country of origin, species of fish, address of the supplier, storage, transport, and inspection requirements, such as microbiological analysis, in the packing and labeling requirements. Senator Tulfo reiterated that BFAR had notified the public that beginning on December 4, it would confiscate pampano and pink salmon found for sale in wet markets.

Senator Tulfo stated that according to some reports, BFAR enforced the order due to the saturation of wet markets with pampano and salmon, making it impossible for vendors of local species of fish to compete anymore. He clarified that BFAR would not confiscate fish with a CNI.

Senator Legarda believed that a committee hearing would be the best venue for addressing the matter. She then expressed concern for the market vendors who may be caught breaching the order and encouraged BFAR to study and respond within 24 hours to the questions posed that day.

Senator Legarda surmised that the 1999 FAO order was not an outright ban. She requested BFAR to submit to the Body its justification for the 22-year delay in the order's implementation.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

With permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

It was 4:41 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:41 p.m., the session was resumed.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Tulfo and the interpellations thereon to the Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 285

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 285, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING CHESS PRODIGY
BINCE RAFAEL OPERIANO FOR WINNING THE SIXTH EASTERN ASIA
YOUTH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP IN BANGKOK, THAILAND,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 293.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Journal* and *Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villanueva for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 285, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

It is my honor to give commendation to our eight-year-old chess prodigy, Bince Rafael Operiano, who emerged as the champion in the 6th Eastern Asia Youth Chess Championship held in Bangkok, Thailand last November 2022.

His talent and skills in this mind sport were discovered at a very young age. When he was six years old, he won the National Age Chess Group Championship – Kiddie Category in Albay. He also won the Boys Under 9 category in the National Youth and Schools Chess Championships Grand Finals in Dapitan City, Zamboanga del Norte, last September 2022.

Operiano's victory in the international tournament is a testament to the exceptional talent and global excellence in sports of young Filipino athletes.

Magagaling po talaga ang kabataang Pilipino sa larangan ng sports. Pero nakalulungkot po na kailangan nilang dumaan sa matinding hirap para lamang mabigyan ng pagkakataong makipagtungali sa mga manlalaro sa ibang bansa.

Operiano's family had to solicit for plane tickets and other expenses for this competition. Operiano and his father even had to spend three days at the airport while waiting for the plane tickets sponsored by the Philippine Sports Commission. As a fellow athlete, this Representation fully supports the need for a higher budget for sports development and for our athletes. *Kaya po sinuportahan natin ang increase ng budget ng Philippine Sports Commission para sa susunod na taon.* If we recall, the PSC's budget in 2022 was only P725.238 million, while its budget for next year, per our Third Reading version of the General Appropriations Bill, is P2.327 billion. Chess prodigy Operiano's outstanding performance has brought immense pride and inspiration to the Filipino people and, thus, merits, honor, and recognition.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR GO

Senator Go manifested that he would be submitting his cosponsorship speech on Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 285 and 293 for insertion into the *Journal* and *Record of the Senate*.

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COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

At the instance of Senator Revilla and upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Revilla on Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 285 and 293 into the *Journal* and the *Record of the Senate*:

It is my honor to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 285 and 293, congratulating and commending chess prodigy Bince Rafael Operiano for winning the 6th Eastern Asia Youth Championship held last November 4 to 13, 2022 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Chess players are artists. *Tunay na kahanga-hanga ang bilis, husay, at talino ng mga manlalaro nito. At ang naipamalas ni Rafael sa musmos niyang edad ay higit na nakamamangha lalo na't sa likod ng gilás at galing ay ang kuwento ng kanyang buhay. Hindi nya hinayaang maging balakid ang kahirapan sa buhay upang magtagumpay.*

Sadyang iba ang talent ng mga Pinoy. Sa laro ng buhay, Rafael, dalangin ko ang patuloy mong pagwawagi. Stay inspired!

We should not stop here. As we recognize the honor for the sterling performances here and abroad, we should continue nurturing and honing them so they can pursue greater heights and bring glory and prestige to the country.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all senators were made coauthors of the resolution.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 285

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 285, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 293, was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 286

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 286, entitled

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND CONGRATULATING ALEIA AIELLE AGUILAR FOR HER OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AT THE ABU DHABI WORLD JIU-JITSU CHAMPIONSHIPS,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 294 and 318.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Journal* and *Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villanueva for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 286, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

Another young Filipino athlete is given spotlight in our resolution. Five-year-old Aleia Aguilar became the Philippines' youngest world champion in Brazilian jiu-jitsu after conquering the Kids 1 under 16 kg event at the 2022 Abu Dhabi World Jiu-Jitsu Championship on November 13, 2022.

Aguilar's victory is a testament that jiu-jitsu runs in the family. She is the daughter of Maybelline Masuda, the first Filipino jiu-jitsu world champion in 2009 and a gold medalist at the 2014 Asian Beach Games, and Alvin Aguilar, a gold medalist at the Asian Jiu-Jitsu Championship and considered the father of mixed martial arts in the Philippines as well as the president and founder of the Universal Reality Combat Championship.

Aguilar's triumph at a very young age shows the importance of training and focusing on our athletes while they are young. Similar to how other countries scout for talented young athletes, our country's grassroots sports development programs, like the Palarong Pambansa and the Philippine National Games, served as avenues to spot potential world-class athletes.

This Representation also filed Senate Bill No. 569, or the Sports Varsity Teams in Basic Education Act. We believed that through a varsity system, student athletes in K-12 will have a better chance to play athletically at a higher level. Furthermore, an institutionalized varsity sports team in basic education can pave the way for the provision of training equipment and upkeep of modern facilities that can help improve the training of our young athletes.

Aguilar, becoming the youngest Jiu-Jitsu World Champion, brings pride and honor to the Philippines. We are incredibly proud of her in her historic feat and we join our colleagues in congratulating and commending Aleia Aguilar for bringing pride and honor to our country and people.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 286, 294, and 318, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

We would like to cosponsor the resolution recognizing Aleia Aguilar after winning the kids 16-kilogram competition at the 2022 Abu Dhabi World Jiu Jitsu Championships. With this feat, she became the Philippines' youngest ever world champion in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. *Nasabi ko lamang po kanina kay Senator Tolentino, kawawa naman, mga five years old. Anyway, napakagalang.*

Aguilar was awarded the gold medal after claiming victory over Gabriela Vercosa of Brazil in the championship match held at the Jiu Jitsu in Abu Dhabi. Her success can be traced back to her early introduction to the sport by her Jiu Jitsu loving parents. Aleia's accomplishments demonstrate that passion can be developed at home, and all Filipinos can be proud of its youngest Jiu Jitsu world champion. *Patunay rin po si Aleia na walang pinipiling edad o kasarian upang tayo ay magtagumpay sa larangan ng sports lalo na kung tayo ay magpursigi. May Aleia's success also serve as an inspiration to us legislators to support bills aimed at developing our grassroots sports program so that more young people like Aleia can succeed in the field of sports and bring honor to the country.*

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

At the instance of Senator Revilla and upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech on Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 286, 294, and 318 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

Allow me to associate myself as a cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 286, 294 and 318 recognizing and congratulating Aleia Aielle Aguilar for her outstanding performance at the 2022 Abu Dhabi World Jiu-Jitsu Championships.

Isang pambihirang pagkakataon ang mapahanay sa mga kampiyon sa kabila ng kamusmusan – kagaya ng ipinamalas ng ating limang taong gulang na kampiyon na si Aleia. Ang karangalang inuwi nya ay simbolo rin ng matibay na inspirasyon para sa mga Pilipinong kabataang nangangarap magtagumpay sa larangan ng sports hindi lang sa ating bansa kundi sa buong mundo.

She broke down limitations – proving that neither age nor gender is a hindrance to triumph. *Isang bata, isang babae: lumalaban sa isang paligsahang minsa'y eksklusibo lamang sa kalalakihan, sa mundong madalas hindi patas.*

Nawa ay patuloy nating hubugin at suportahan ang mga kabataan upang maging tulay tayo sa kaganapan ng kanilang mga pangarap sa loob at labas ng bansa – at sa huli, karangalan din para sa ating bayan ang kanilang maiuuwi.

Aleia, you make the country proud, and you inspire us to continue making this world better so we can continue rearing and nurturing kids like you. You have a bright future ahead.

Congratulations, Aleia! *Mabuhay ang mga Pilipinong atleta!*

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LAPID

At the instance of Senator Lapid and upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech on Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 286, 294, and 318 into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Isa pong karangalan ang tumayo sa harap ninyo upang kilalanin si Aleia Aielle Aguilar na nagkamit ng gold medal sa 2022 Abu Dhabi World Jiu-Jitsu Championships.

Si Aguilar, edad limang taong gulang lamang, ang pinakabatang Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu world champion ng ating bansa. Ang kanyang tagumpay ay nagpapakita sa galing, dedikasyon at world-class na talento ng kabataang atletang Pilipino. Siya ay nagsisilbing mabuting ehemplo para sa bagong henerasyon na tiyak akong sa hinaharap ay lalo pang magbibigay dangal at maghahakot ng medalya para sa ating bansa.

Marapat lamang po na kilalanin natin ang panalo ni Aleia Aielle Aguilar at nawa'y patuloy na suportahan ng Senado ang jiu-jitsu, martial arts at iba pang larangan ng palakasan.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all senators were made coauthors of the resolution.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 286

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 286, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 294 and 318, was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 287

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 287, entitled

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING AND CONGRATULATING RAFAEL "PAENG" NEPOMUCENO FOR HIS OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AT THE ASIAN SENIORS CHAMPIONSHIPS,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 290 and 295.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villanueva for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 287, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:



From our youngest athlete to a master athlete in the field of bowling, Filipino bowler and coach Paeng Nepomuceno added another medal to his long list of feats by taking home the gold medal at the Asian Senior Championships held recently in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on November 12, 2022. He scored an impressive 1,264 points as he topped the men's singles 65 and up competition.

Sana all—mapapa-sana all ka na lamang.

Widely considered as one of the greatest international bowlers of all time, Nepomuceno is a six-time world champion and has been honored by the Guinness World Records four times for being the youngest Tenpin Bowling World Champion at the 1976 Bowling World Cup and for most wins of the Tenpin Bowling World Cup in 1976, 1980, 1992, and 1996, and twice for the most Tenpin Bowling titles.

His talent, discipline, sportsmanship, and longevity continue to be a source of pride for the country and prove why he is a living legend in the sports of bowling and one of the greatest Filipino athletes of all time.

With that, I join our distinguished colleagues in honoring the latest performance of our dear *kababayan*, Rafael "Paeng" Nepomuceno.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 287, 290, and 295, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

I rise once more today to cosponsor the resolution congratulating the legendary Filipino bowler and coach, Paeng Nepomuceno, for adding another medal to his long list of accomplishments after winning gold at the Asian Senior Championships which was recently held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Nepomuceno won the men's singles 65 and up competition. Nepomuceno is a six-time world champion and is regarded as one of the all-time great international bowlers. He has also received four Guinness world records awards.

In addition, he is a member of the World Bowling Hall of Fame, a recipient of the President's Award from the International Olympic Committee, and the International Bowling Athlete of the Millennium and Bowling Ambassador Extraordinaire. It is due to his talent, discipline, and sportsmanship that Nepomuceno is considered a living legend in the sports of bowling and one of the greatest Filipino athletes in the history of the competition. His most recent victory shows that he continues to be a source of pride for the nation and is, therefore, deserving of our praise and commendation.

Muli, maraming salamat po kay Sir Paeng sa patuloy na pagdadala niya ng karangalan para sa ating bansa.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

At the instance of Senator Revilla and upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the following cosponsorship speech on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 287 was inserted into the *Journal* and the *Record of the Senate*:

May I have the honor to cosponsor this resolution commending Rafael "Paeng" Nepomuceno for once again bringing honor to our country in the field of bowling.

Makailang ulit na tayong iniangat ni Paeng sa buong mundo. Isa pa uli ngayon. In the 16th Asian Seniors Bowling Championships held last November 9 – 15, 2022, Paeng bagged the gold in the men's singles 65+ division. Our very own Paeng bested Japan's Akira Nakada and Korea's Jin Headong with a score of 1,264 pinfalls.

Paeng has proven once again that he is one of the all-time greats in the sport, even at 65 years old. Let this august Chamber be one in recognizing him once more.

Ang mga tulad ni Paeng ang nagpapatunay na hindi balakid ang edad sa patuloy na pagwawagi sa mga hamon ng buhay.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR LAPID

At the instance of Senator Lapid and upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Lapid on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 287 was inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

Hindi maikakailang kahanga-hanga ang galing ng atletang Pilipino. Isa pong natatanging karangalan ang tumayo sa harap ninyo upang bigyang-pugay si Rafael "Paeng" Nepomuceno, isang alamat sa larangan ng bowling at multi-year world champion.

Sa edad na 65 taon, patuloy pa ring naghahakot ng medalya para sa ating bansa si Paeng Nepomuceno nang siya ay magkamit ng gold medal sa men's singles 65+ division sa 16th Asian Senior Championships na ginanap sa Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Sa nasabing paligsahan, tinalo niya ang 59 na iba pang kalahok mula sa iba't-ibang panig ng mundo. Patunay ito sa world-class at consistent na talento ni Paeng, sa kabila ng paglipas ng panahon.

Kilalang-kilala hindi lamang sa ating bansa kundi sa buong mundo si Paeng bilang isang napakagaling na atleta at six-time World bowling champion. Nararapat lamang na ipasa ng Senado ang mga resolusyong ito bilang pasasalamat na din sa ambag ni Paeng Nepomuceno sa ating bayan.

COAUTHORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all senators were made coauthors of the resolution.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 287

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 287, taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution Nos. 290 and 295, was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

SECOND ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following Message from the House of Representatives which the Chair referred to the Committee on Justice and Human Rights:

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 29 November 2022, the House of Representatives passed House Bill No. 6224, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO JUSTIN DONTA BROWNLEE,
in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate.

To the Committee on Justice and Human Rights

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 5:00 p.m.

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RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:21 p.m., the session was resumed.

WITHDRAWAL OF SENATE BILL NO. 1212

Senator Villanueva stated that in a letter to Senate President Zubiri, Senator Revilla manifested that he was withdrawing Senate Bill No. 1212 (An Act Authorizing Higher Education Curriculum Development and Graduate Training in Advance Energy and Green Building Technologies), which he authored and was already referred to the Committees on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Energy; and Finance.

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the withdrawal of the bill.

The Chair stated that the aforesaid committees should be properly informed about the withdrawal.

THIRD ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following committee report which the Chair assigned to the Calendar for Ordinary Business:

Committee Report No. 13, prepared and submitted by the Committee on Justice and Human Rights on House Bill No. 6224, introduced by Representative Romero, *et al.*, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO JUSTIN DONTA BROWNLEE.

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 13 on House Bill No. 6224 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 13 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6224

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, House Bill No. 6224 (Committee Report No. 13), entitled

AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO JUSTIN DONTA BROWNLEE.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXII of the *Rules of the Senate*, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Record of the Senate*.

The Chair recognized Senator Tolentino for the sponsorship.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR TOLENTINO

Senator Tolentino, on behalf of the Committee Justice and Human Rights, submitted for plenary consideration House Bill No. 6224, entitled "An Act Granting Philippine Citizenship to Justin Donta Brownlee," under Committee Report No. 13.

The full text of Senator Tolentino's sponsorship speech follows:

We recommend the approval of this Committee Report without amendments. As a member of Barangay Ginebra, together with some of our colleagues here, *karangalan ko pong isulong ang pagiging Pilipino ng isang kilalang basketball player na naninirahan na sa ating bansa* for the last six years. Compared to other athletes who were granted Filipino citizenships before, Justin Donta Brownlee has been with the Filipinos for the last six years.

Pursuant to Congress' constitutional power, it has the legislative authority under Article VI, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution, to grant Filipino citizenship to certain foreign nationals for their significant contribution or notable service to the country and to the Filipino people. With this, Mr. Brownlee has exemplified to be an exceptional basketball player and a role model for the Filipino youth.

Born in Foxton, Georgia, Mr. Brownlee began playing basketball at a high level with St. John's University in 2009. After college, he further honed his skills by training with the NBA development league from 2011 to 2014. He then brought his athleticism to the Philippine shores back in 2016 when after being just a replacement import for his ball club, he won five titles with Ginebra while playing in the Philippine Basketball Association. He was awarded the best import during the 2018 Commissioner's Cup and the 2021 PBA Governor's Cup. With his stellar showing in the PBA, he was also tapped to play for San Miguel Alab Pilipinas team in the ASEAN basketball league, which also yielded a championship in the 2017-2018 season. After several stops in the various international tournaments such as the 30th Dubai International Basketball tournament, the Lebanon Basketball League, and the UAE National Basketball League, he returned to the PBA to win more individual and collective accolades with his mother team.

To say that the Philippines is obsessed with basketball is an understatement. In every barangay, we see children playing on the streets wearing slippers or even barefoot, shooting in makeshift basketball rings sometimes made of old tires and even discarded toilet bowls. Basketball is played and known by almost everyone in the country. This is how much we love basketball and look up to the discipline, the athleticism, and the focus that come with exceptionally being great at such an enjoyable sport now. This is why we look up to and idolize basketball players like Mr. Brownlee.

Marami po ang nangangarap na baka manalo naman ang Pilipinas sa mga iba't-ibang kumpetisyon. Marami po ang nakapanood kung paano talunin ng Morocco ang Belgium sa World Cup. Maraming nakapanood kung paano nanalo ang Japan sa World Cup. Maraming nangangarap hanggang sa ngayon na baka sa isang pagkakataon, sa isang iglap, ay magkaroon din tayo ng ganoong karanasan.

Mr. Brownlee is part of that dream among youngsters, among hoopsters, among basketball players like our Majority Leader and the great shooting guard Sen. Christopher Go, as well as the great enforcer Sen. Ronald Dela Rosa, and the great shooting forward Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito.

Mr. Brownlee stands at 6'6", although I intimated to the Minority Leader that he might be 6'6" ½" or even 6' 7", and averaged 29.29 points, 10.57 rebounds, and seven assists per game.

I would like to state for the record that Mr. Brownlee, who is about to arrive in a few minutes — he was just entangled in some traffic conditions along the way — will be voluntarily applying to be a citizen of the Philippines as we participate and host the FIBA Basketball Tournament next year.

Mahirap naman po na mapagaya tayo sa Qatar na opening round lamang ng World Cup, sila iyong host, natalo na kaagad. So, iyon po iyong iniwasan natin. We will be the host of the World Cup Basketball next year, and we hope to achieve some victories in that group bracket. To say that our applicant for naturalization today will greatly help the Philippine Gilas team in their quest for that elusive glory is undeniable. He will be part, I believe, of the team that we will be sending to the Southeast Asian Games and hopefully the Asian Games.

But let me underscore that outside the field of basketball, Mr. Brownlee has endeared himself not just with the Philippine basketball fans, but more especially to our youth. I was informed that during the House deliberations several weeks ago, *sinabi po, tinanong po si Mr. Brownlee* — and



I am now speaking in our dialect — *bakit gusto mo maging Filipino? Ang sabi po ni Mr. Brownlee* — he is now a resident of Pasig City — *tuwing wala raw siya ginagawa* especially during the lockdown period *ay paminsan-minsan po ay nag-ii-scooter siya, naka-motor, umiikot po siya sa Pasig City at minsan sa Quezon City at nakikita po niya na ang mga Pilipino, kahit sa anong kundisyon, kahit sa mga informal settlements, naglalaro ng basketball, masasaya.* Nowhere in the world can you find such a group of people, always happy amid hardship. To summarize the answer of Mr. Brownlee, *naramdaman na niya po ang kultura ng Pilipino. Hindi lamang po sa pagkain ng adobo at ng menudo, naramdaman na po niya at bahagi na po siya ng ugaling Pilipino.*

Having stayed in the Philippines for almost six years now, he would often mix with Filipinos in his own barangay in Pasig City. According to him — and I repeat this — he admires Filipinos because despite difficult conditions, we still manage to smile and be positive. With all the negativity and divisiveness in the world, he admires the Filipinos for always having a positive outlook in life and veering towards unity in the midst of any cultural divide.

Tatanungin po siguro ako mamaya ng kung sino ang mag-i-interpellate sa akin kung ano ang pagkakaiba niya doon sa mga naunang naturalized Filipinos. Mr. Brownlee stayed here unlike the other Filipino naturalized players who came from abroad to play here. He was here before he was naturalized. *Kaya mayroon na po siyang acclimatization, culturalization, and more than a positive outlook as a Filipino because he is part of us.* He admires the Filipinos, as I have said, because of our positive outlook in life. Indeed, he has embraced the Filipino culture, as well as embodied the Filipino values of perseverance, determination, and dedication to his craft.

Kanina po, nagkaroon po ng hearing ang komite ni Senator Dela Rosa tungkol sa ROTC. *Ang sinabi po doon ng isang retired general, ang training ng ROTC is not just to imbibe discipline, citizenship, and patriotism, but to enable the Filipino youth to be prepared to defend the Philippines. Iyon po iyong pinagtalunan kanina sa ROTC hearings.*

I was privileged to ask a pointed question to Mr. Brownlee, and I would like to show with pride this video clip.

At this juncture, a videotape was played showing Senator Tolentino questioning Mr. Brownlee.

Medyo pabiro lang po siguro ang dating sa iba but that, to me, is a sign not just of a person aspiring to become a Filipino because he is an athlete, but he would want to become a Filipino and die, perhaps, as a Filipino.

I recall a favorite idol of mine — his name is Governor-General *Francis Burton Harrison.* *He served the Philippines as an American. He was a member of the American contingent fighting during that American-Cuban War.* I speak from the heart. I have no notes. *Governor-General Francis Burton Harrison founded more than a hundred, almost 200, municipalities in the Philippines, including Oton, Iloilo; a town in Guimaras; and several towns in the North, among others. He was an adviser to President Manuel Luis Quezon. He died in November 1957 in New Jersey, in the United States. He died in a hospital but he came from a wealthy family. His father was former adviser to the confederate forces. They could have won; they could have reached the White House but they lost during the civil war.*

When he died, they opened his last will and testament and we will be surprised. The first sentence of the last will and testament: “To my relatives, my brothers and sisters: when I die, please bury me in my beloved country, the Philippines, in Manila.” There was no wake done in New Jersey, USA. Immediately after that will was validated, he was brought to Manila. He now lies buried in an unrecognized graveyard somewhere in the North Cemetery, near the gates of the North Cemetery.

I have seen that gate. I have seen that graveyard. I have seen his resting place. For several years since 1957 or 1958, as I speak today, no one has visited that graveyard, no one. There is no relative of Governor-General *Francis Burton Harrison* visiting that graveyard on November 1 every year. *Wala po siyang kamag-anak. Wala po siyang tiyuhin, tiyahin, kumpare, pamangkin, inaanak para mag-alay ng bulaklak tuwing Araw ng mga Patay.*

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What I am saying is this: there are, perhaps, some non-Filipinos wanting to be Filipinos, who would prefer to die as Filipinos. I am not saying that Mr. Justin Brownlee will be part of that tradition. But what I am saying is this, *hindi po nakakahiya na tumanggap tayo ng banyaga na maging Pilipino, lalong-lalo na kung sila ay magiging tunay na Pilipino at hihigitan pa ang mga ginagawa ng ating mga bayani, kagaya po ng ginawa ni Governor-General Francis Burton Harrison, whose only legacy is a street name in Pasay City, a small alley in Baguio City, and a mall which is now being demolished to pave the way for another condominium project.*

So, we have here another American who will become a Filipino, hopefully, if this Chamber would approve. Again, as I mentioned a while ago, he has embraced the Filipino culture; he has embodied the Filipino values. And, I have said this before, as a true Filipino citizen, he will dedicate his service, as he promised, by being part of the readiness of the Philippine Army Reserve Force.

In all aspects, the Philippines has evolved and is continuing to adapt in the international sphere to remain competitive, especially in sports. It is this Representation's strong belief together with the other authors of the measure—Senator Go and Sen. Ronald Dela Rosa who filed Senate Bill No. 1336, "An Act Granting Philippine Citizenship to Justin Donta Brownlee; Sen. Sonny Angara who filed Senate Bill No. 1516 entitled, "An Act Granting Philippine Citizenship to Justin Donta Brownlee;" Sen. Joel Villanueva who introduced Senate Bill No. 1519, entitled "An Act Granting Philippine Citizenship to Justin Donta Brownlee"—that Mr. Brownlee will not just be a great addition to Philippine sports, specifically basketball, but to our country as well. I believe he will be an exceptional addition to the long list of proud citizens of our great Republic.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

In cosponsoring House Bill No. 6224, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

As one of the coauthors of the measures being taken into consideration, it is with great honor that I cosponsor the bill granting Philippine citizenship to Mr. Justin Donta Brownlee. Born in Georgia, USA, Mr. Brownlee first arrived in the Philippines in 2016 as a recruit in the Philippine Basketball Association competitions. He initially joined as a replacement import. He then showcased his talents which led Barangay Ginebra to claim its first PBA championship in eight years. Since then, he has assisted and led his team achieve five PBA championships in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021. *Dahil sa kagalingan niya sa court, maraming Pilipino ang napahanga niya.* He is admired by millions of Filipino basketball fans. Mr. Brownlee did not take too much credit for his team's accomplishments but just took pride in just being there for his team.

Hindi lamang po dahil sa husay sa court dapat hangaan si Justin Brownlee, kundi pati na rin sa kaniyang pagpapakumbaba. Despite suffering from an injury last year, Mr. Brownlee managed to claim the fifth spot in the all-time imports scoring list. He was also named best import twice, first in the 2018 PBA Commissioner's Cup and second in the 2021 PBA Governor's Cup.

This shows his dedication to sport and his commitment to his team. *Kaya naman habang tumatagal mas nagiging deserving siya na ma-naturalize. Nakaka-blend siya sa basketball team natin. Alam na niya kung paano iyong mga galaw ng kaniyang mga teammates. Alam naman natin na napaka-importante kung naka-blend ka na sa mga teammates mo para manalo. Nandiyan po isa pang idol katabi ni Justin Brownlee, iyong team captain, si Tolentino na magaling mag-three points; nakita ko kagabi, puro three points.*

And, of course, *salamat din po sa ating enforcer, Sen. Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa; ang ating Majority Leader at court general, ang pinakamagaling na basketball player dito sa Senado — Sen. Joel Villanueva; Sen. Joseph Victor "JV" G. Ejercito; Sen. Sonny Angara, napakahusay; of course, ang aming team manager— Sen. Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay; at ang aming muse—Sen. Risa Hontiveros.*

With his career achievements, I have no doubt that Justin Brownlee will be a huge help to Gilas Pilipinas in the FIBA Basketball World Cup next year. *Importante po na magkaroon tayo ng malakas na national team dahil tayo rin ang isa sa mga hosts ng FIBA Basketball World Cup sa susunod na taon.*

Nakalimutan ko pong banggitin, of course, aside from our muse and manager, nandito ang financier ng team Senate, Sen. Cynthia Villar—kayo po ang pinaka-financier dito; ang ating Senate President, pinaka-boss natin dito.

Salamat din po sa lahat ng kasamahan natin dito na sumusuporta and, of course, alam ko naman na sinusupportahan po ninyo ang ating Gilas Pilipinas basketball team.

As a PBA fan, madalas po akong manood ng mga laban at masasabi ko talaga na malaki ang magiging contribution ni Justin Brownlee sa ating national team. Sa pananatili niya rito sa ating bansa, napatunayan niya, hindi lamang sa basketball skills niya kundi pati na rin sa pagmamahal niya sa Pilipino at sa bansa. Alam kong naisapuso na niya ang ating tradisyon at kultura. Napamahal na siya sa mga Pilipino at alam ko rin na napamahal na rin ang mga Pilipino sa kaniya.

Sabi ko nga sa hearing, ito ang pinaka-importante—higit sa talento sa basketball, ipinapakita niya ang puso niya na lumalaban para sa Pilipino at ang pagmamahal niya sa ating bayan. Patuloy siyang magiging inspirasyon ng Pilipinong kabataan lalo na pagdating sa sports at paglayo sa mga bisyo katulad ng ilegal na droga.

Paalala ko lamang kay Mr. Brownlee, katulad ng napag-usapan noong hearing, ang pagbibigay ng Philippine citizenship ay hindi basta-basta. Bukod sa paglaro sa larangan ng palakasan at pagrepresenta ng bansa, kasama rin dito ang tungkulin ng bawat mamamayang Pilipino na magsilbi sa bayan at unahin ang interes ng Pilipinas.

Mr. Brownlee, nawa ay patuloy mong isapuso ang pagiging isang Pilipino, mahal in mo ang Pilipinas higit sa pagmamahal na ipinaparamdam sa iyo ng mga Pilipino.

As chairperson of the Committee on Sports and an avid basketball fan, I am proud that we would gain a new brother that we can proudly call “Filipino.”

It is for these reasons that I am asking this Chamber’s support for granting Philippine citizenship to Mr. Justin Brownlee. Three points!

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

In cosponsoring House Bill No. 6224, Senator Dela Rosa likewise delivered the following speech:

It is my honor and privilege to cosponsor House Bill No. 6224, taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1336, filed by this Representation under Committee Report No. 13, a measure which will grant Philippine citizenship to Mr. Justin Donta Brownlee.

Born on April 23, 1988 in Georgia, USA, Mr. Brownlee first arrived in the Philippines in 2016 as a basketball recruit of the Philippine Basketball Association. He traveled across the globe and easily bounced his way to every Filipino’s heart. He was invited to become an import of the best PBA Team, my team, Barangay Ginebra. Mr. Brownlee was so loved that the residents of Barangay Ginebra invited him to play for them again and again and again. They could not get enough of him and he was treated like their own.

In such a short span of time, Mr. Brownlee has been awarded a two-time Best Import trophy, an achievement that only the best of the best can attain. Indeed, Mr. Brownlee has exhibited his high basketball IQ. This resulted to five PBA titles for my beloved Ginebra Team.

Authoring and cosponsoring a naturalization bill in favor of a very humble individual like Mr. Brownlee is more than an honor for a legislator like me. His humility has endured him not only to the Filipino basketball fans but to the Filipino nation, especially the “One Ginebra Nation.”

He has chosen to raise the Philippine flag to represent the country in the international arena by choice and, more importantly, without any reservation. It is not just his love for basketball and his astounding performance that make Mr. Brownlee as inspiration to us basketball fans.

During the committee hearing of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights, Mr. Brownlee, without any hesitation, expressed his intention to join the government in the antidrug campaign, and the AFP Reserve Force should he be granted Philippine citizenship.

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With his qualities, it is this Representation's humble opinion that Mr. Brownlee is truly a Filipino by heart as he has shown love for the country, a quality that makes one more than qualified to be granted Philippine citizenship. To grant his citizenship will make us one step closer from having our own version of a Dream Team that will represent and win for our country in international basketball tournaments.

Thus, I urge my colleagues, Ginebra fans or not, to support the passage of this measure.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara manifested that he would be submitting his cosponsorship speech on House Bill No. 6224 for insertion into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva delivered his cosponsorship speech on House Bill No. 6224, as follows:

Basketball is life and it goes without saying that the Philippines, as a nation, is a basketball-crazy country. Aside from religiously following the National Basketball Association and idolizing its superstars, the country is likewise proud of its own Philippine Basketball Association, the country's professional basketball league and the first of its kind in Asia.

Since then, a number of other professional and collegiate basketball leagues have been introduced in response to the growing enthusiasm of the Filipinos to participate in this sport.

I, myself, was a product of the varsity team of UST High School. My high school teammate is here in the gallery; my college teammate in the person of Jay Torres—a UST Tigers' basketball superstar—is also here. And this dedication to the game of basketball is further manifested in international basketball competitions such as the Asian Basketball Cup, where we found out that Justin Brownlee is one of our prized players. Thus, it is my great honor to cosponsor House Bill No. 6224, under Committee Report No. 13, "An Act Granting Philippine Citizenship to Justin Donta Brownlee."

Justin was born on April 23, 1988 in Georgia, United States of America. His contributions helped his team with five PBA titles, and as a Barangay Ginebra fan, we are looking forward to his sixth title in the PBA. Aside from winning the Best Import award not once but twice, these achievements have brought enormous pride and joy to the Philippine Basketball Association, and admiration from all basketball enthusiasts in the country. With a very illustrious career in basketball, he wishes to play for the Philippine national team and has expressed his desire to stay in the country and be a naturalized citizen.

I was present during the committee hearing held in this very building of GSIS, and I was so impressed by the fact that he volunteered to train our very own Gilas Pilipinas players because of his experience. If we recall, he has been playing in different parts of the world so he knows what it was like to play in international competitions. He volunteered himself *para sa ganoon ay mahasa at lalo pang gumaling at ma-expose ang ating mga* basketball players in international competitions. His drive to hone his craft, discipline to stay in shape, and determination to win the game make him an epitome of a true Filipino athlete.

Mr. Brownlee also demonstrated his willingness to immerse himself in the Filipino culture by learning to speak Tagalog, being involved in several community service projects, and even expressing his excitement to vote in the next elections. He has indeed imbibed the *bayanihan* spirit.

We will not ask him to sing the *Lupang Hinirang* today — probably after we pass this particular measure — but Mr. Brownlee's unequivocal allegiance to this country, admirable sportsmanship, and remarkable skills in the field of basketball will complement the country's roster of world-class athletes and help the Philippine national team regain recognition in international basketball tournaments.

His love for the Philippines and basketball truly makes him a Filipino at heart and we are very blessed to have him. We welcome him as one of our own and we look forward to seeing him wearing the Philippine jersey in the 2023 FIBA World Cup.

Before I end, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our esteemed colleague and sponsor of this measure, Sen. Francis "Tol" N. Tolentino, for his unwavering support for the field of sports in the country, and for steadfastly pushing for the passage of this bill.

As I mentioned earlier, this citizenship bill is probably the fastest, if I am not mistaken, in the history of this august Chamber because of time constraints that we are encountering. So, again, this Representation fully supports this particular measure.

COSPONSORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senators Binay, Hontiveros and Villar (C) were made cosponsors of House Bill No. 6224.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR ESTRADA

Senator Estrada manifested his full support for the bill that would grant Filipino citizenship to Mr. Brownlee. He revealed that he was an avid Ginebra fan who never missed a game when former Sen. Robert Jaworski still played for the team.

COSPONSOR

Senator Villanueva manifested that Senator Villar (M) was cosponsor of House Bill No. 6224.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests from the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas:

- Mr. Butch Antonio, Deputy Executive Director;
- Atty. Aga Francisco, Legal Counsel; and
- Mr. Mark Solano, Operations Officer.

Senator Ejercito welcomed the guests to the Senate.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6224

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the bill.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

Senator Villanueva also acknowledged the presence of his former UST professor who played an important role in his life, Prof. Rosemary Dinio, former Dean of the Economics Society of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), as well as his former classmates in the university who were seated with Professor Dinio in the gallery.

Senator Ejercito welcomed the guests to the Senate.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 6:03 p.m.

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RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:10 p.m., the session was resumed.

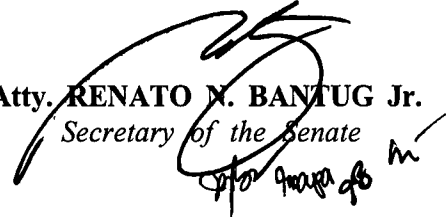
ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, December 5, 2022.

It was 6:11 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

Atty. **RENATO N. BANTUG Jr.**
Secretary of the Senate



Approved on December 5, 2022